

## Recent Acquisitions and Conservation of Antiquities at the Ure Museum, University of Reading 2004–2008

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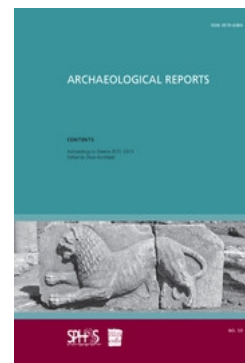
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# RECENT ACQUISITIONS AND CONSERVATION OF ANTIQUITIES AT THE URE MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF READING 2004–2008

The Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology, in the Department of Classics at the University of Reading, has experienced something of a renaissance in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium. It acquired status as a registered museum in 2001 and accreditation in 2008. It has boasted a bespoke web-accessible database since 2002 and a professionally designed website since 2004 ([www.reading.ac.uk/ure](http://www.reading.ac.uk/ure)). Finally, in 2005 its physical display was completely redesigned. While the existence of the Museum and some of its collections have long been well known to scholars of Gr vases – thanks to the tireless efforts of Percy and Annie Ure in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Ct, including their 1954 publication of *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum. Great Britain 12. University of Reading* (London, Oxford University Press, 1954), *AR 9* (1962–1963) and some listings in Beazley and Trendall's volumes (see J.D. Beazley, *Attic Red-figure Vase-painters*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963], A.D. Trendall and A. Cambitoglou, *The Red-figured Vases of Apulia* [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978–1982], A.D. Trendall, *The Red-figured Vases of Lucania, Campania and Sicily* [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1967] – much of the collection remains unknown. Even in the 1960s, after all, the publication of fragments, lamps and Cypriote ceramics remained unfashionable. And the Ures, experts in Gr pottery, were little interested in publishing the Egyptian artefacts (approximately a 5<sup>th</sup> of the displayed collection) and other non-ceramic artefacts. As part of the Ure Museum's renaissance, University of Reading staff and students are researching and gradually publishing its hidden treasures: A.C. Smith, *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum. Great Britain 23. Reading Museum Service (Reading Borough Council)* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007) documents more than 150 vases, most in the Ure Museum, from the Reading Museum Service (Reading Borough Council); a forthcoming fascicule of the *Corpus of Cypriote Antiquities* will catalogue the Cypriote holdings in the Ure Museum; and another volume of *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* will detail approximately 200 holdings of the Ure Museum that are hitherto unpublished. The items discussed below, however, are those that have been acquired by the Ure Museum since 2004, as well as a sample of the 19 Coptic textile fragments, which have been brought out of storage, conserved by the Textile Conservation Centre in Winchester and are now displayed in the Ure Museum (since 2005).

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

**2004.10.1 (Figs 1, 2).** Handmade Cypriote jug. *H.* 21.2cm; maximum *di.* 12.6cm. Base ring I ware, ca. 1300–1100 BC (LCypriote II). Formerly in the collection of R. Crowhurst; donated by the Chichester District Museum.

The shape, with flaring lip, tubular neck, ribbon handle attached from the middle of the neck to the shoulder, bulbous body and short ring base, anticipates the higher footed and smaller base ring ware flasks. Plastic decoration consists of 2 rings around the middle of the neck, 2 stylized snakes across the shoulder, terminating in pointed heads (each with 2 round eyes) on either side of a vertical loop enclosing a wavy vertical line. The latter element recalls the stylized (and meaningless) 'cartouches' that the Phoenicians copied from the Egyptians in the 12<sup>th</sup> Ct. If such a Phoenician Egyptianizing element might have been borrowed by the Cypriotes, then this might argue for a later date in the range provided above.

The brownish-black slip (which lends itself to the alternate terminology, 'black ware', used by H.B. Walters in the Maroni tomb lists – H.B. Walters, *Excavations in Cyprus (Notes and Tomb-Lists) 1895–97. Maroni Excavations 1897* [London, British Museum, Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Manuscript 65a]) has been severely eroded from the surface. Some fingerprint marks are still visible above and below the snakes, indicating areas where the craftsman would have applied the plastic decoration to the body.



1. Right side view of handmade Cypriote jug (2004.10.1)



2. Detail of the front of handmade Cypriote jug (2004.10.1), showing applied snakes on either side of a 'cartouche'

For parallels, see M. Fortin, *Les collections d'antiquités chypriotes de l'Université Laval et du Musée de l'Amérique française (Québec, Canada)*. *Corpus of Cypriote Antiquities* 16. *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 20.16 (Göteborg, P. Åström, 1996); J. Johnson, *Maroni de Chypre*. *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 59 (Göteborg, P. Åström, 1980), pl. 17.70; P. Åström, *The Late Cypriote Bronze Age*. *Swedish Cyprus Expedition* 4.1c (Lund, Swedish Cyprus Expedition, 1972), 153, fig. 49.2.

**L.2005.7.1 (Figs 3, 4).** Paestan rf stemless cup. H. 4.6cm; w. across handles 25.4cm. LCI, ca. 350–325 BC; attributed to the early Apulianizing Group. On loan from Sally and Terry Fox.

The shape – stemless cup with bowl separated from rim at a carination and elaborate squared handles – and clay – micaceous reddish-brown – are typically Paestan. Yet the style is strongly Apulianizing in terms of: characteristic subject matter includes a hovering Eros on the interior and on one exterior side, and a rushing maiden on the other exterior side, each figure with curly hair emerging from a sphendone; vegetal decoration; treatment of drapery; and frequent use of wg, some with added yellow.



3. Paestan cup (L.2005.7.1)



4. Detail of exterior of Paestan cup (L.2005.7.1), showing woman



5. Core-formed glass alabastron (2005.9.1)



6. Obverse of silver tetradrachm (2006.6.1), showing the head of Herakles wearing a lion skin



7. Reverse of silver tetradrachm (2006.6.1), showing Zeus, enthroned

**2005.9.1 (Fig. 5).** Core-formed glass alabastron, decorated with blue and white zigzags in a counter-clockwise trail. *H.* 12.6cm. EHcl, ca. M4<sup>th</sup>–L3<sup>rd</sup> Ct BC. Said to have been found in Egypt. Formerly in the Mustaki Collection. Purchased from Charles Ede Ltd, through a bequest from Rosemary Chapman and an anonymous donor.

The alabastron has an applied broad horizontal rim disk that slopes sharply to a cylindrical neck, with a downward taper and an angled join with convex shoulders, at the top of a cylindrical body, broadening to a rounded bottom. Two lug handles, each with longish trails, are applied unevenly to the sides. This shape corresponds to Mediterranean Group II.1, as articulated by D.F. Grose, *Early Ancient Glass* (New York, Hudson Hills Press in association with the Toledo Museum of Art, 1989), 127, following D.B. Harden, *Catalogue of Greek and Roman Glass in the British Museum* (London, British Museum Publications, 1981), 100–21.

**2006.6.1 (Figs 6, 7).** AR tetradrachm. *Di.* 2.5cm. Minted at Amphipolis. EHcl, 315–294 BC. Obv: head of youthful Heracles to right, wearing a lion-scalp headdress. Rev: Zeus seated on a throne in ¾ view to left, with an eagle perched on his right hand and sceptre in his upraised left hand. Kantharos (or amphora?) under throne. Inscription in right field: ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ. Formerly in the collection of R. Crowhurst; donated by the Chichester District Museum.

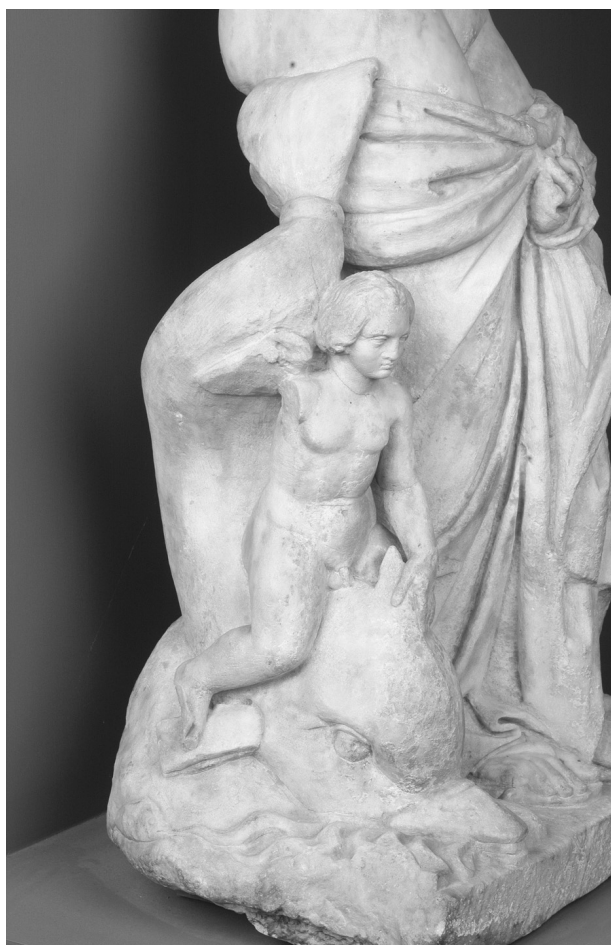
**L.2005.10.3 (BM 1418) (Figs 8, 9).** Statue of bathing Aphrodite and Eros. *H.* 0.94m, *h.* including plinth 1.07m. Rom, probably 2<sup>nd</sup> Ct AD. Found in 1861 at the Sanctuary of Aphrodite at Cyrene in the excavations of R. Murdoch Smith. On loan from the British Museum.

Half-draped Aphrodite, bent at the knees, turned slightly to the left. Her (missing) arms would have reached up to her (missing) head. At her right side is Eros astride a dolphin. The dolphin, waves lapping around her feet and fish (behind the dolphin) suggest Aphrodite's marine associations, such as her birth from the sea (Hes. *Theog.* 173ff), or her role as Aphrodite Euploia (cf. Paus. I.1.3), which was appropriate at the Gr harbour colony at Cyrene. See A.H. Smith, *A Catalogue of Sculpture in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum 2* (London, British Museum, 1900), 237, no. 1418; S. Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine 2* (Paris, E. Leroux, 1899), 357, fig. 9; J.J. Bernoulli, *Aphrodite* (Leipzig, Engelmann, 1873), 263; R.M. Smith and E.A. Porcher, *History of the Recent Discoveries at Cyrene* (London, Day and Son, 1864), 96, 102, no. 51, pl. 72.

**2006.5.2 (Fig. 10).** Roof tile antefix decorated with a palmette. Medium-grained pinkish-red terracotta. *H.* 13.8cm; maximum *w.* 18.8cm; maximum *d.* 17.8cm. Undatable. Purchased in Tunisia before 1918. Gift of Mr David Stafford.



8. Front view of marble statue of Aphrodite with Eros on dolphin (L.2005.10.3)



9. Detail of marble statue (L.2005.10.3), showing Eros on dolphin and a fish



10. Roof tile antefix from Tunisia (2006.5.2)



11. Glazed ceramic tiles from Tunisia (2006.5.3–7)



12. Glazed ceramic tile from Tunisia (2006.5.5)

**2006.5.3–7 (Figs 11, 12).** Five glazed ceramic tiles, with yellow, blue and green vegetal decoration. Maximum *l.* 15.5cm; maximum *w.* 15.7cm; maximum *d.* 2.2cm. 18<sup>th</sup> Ct AD. Purchased in Tunisia before 1918. Gift of Mr David Stafford. Cf. *Couleurs de Tunisie. 25 siècles de céramique* (Paris, Institut du monde arabe, 1994), no. 193.

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## RECENTLY CONSERVED LATE ROMAN AND BYZANTINE TEXTILES

In 2005, 6 textile fragments from the collection of LRom and EMed Egyptian textiles at the Ure Museum were conserved at the Textile Conservation Centre at Winchester. These, in common with the rest of the museum's collection of textiles, have not hitherto been published. According to an accompanying note (undated but presumed to be 19<sup>th</sup> Ct), they were acquired from archaeological sites in Egypt in the L19<sup>th</sup> Ct, with several pieces coming from Akhmîm (the Rom and Byz city of Panopolis) on the E bank of the Nile in S Egypt. This area was subject to several L19<sup>th</sup> Ct excavations and antiquarian pursuits (see, for example, R. Forrer, *Die Graeber und Textilfunde von Achmim-Panopolis* [Strasbourg, E. Birkhäuser, 1891]). Most of the pieces were previously in the possession of the Rev. Greville John Chester (1830–1892), a well-known collector of Egyptian antiquities. Many of the Egyptian textiles now in the collections of major British museums, including those in the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and Liverpool Museum, were acquired by Chester in Egypt in the 1880s whilst the cemeteries were being opened. The Ure Museum's textiles had apparently left Egypt by 1888, but it is not clear how they came to be in the possession of the Ure Museum, the University of Reading not being established at that date. It is most likely that they were part of a variety of 'unconsidered trifles' given by the British Museum to the Ure Museum in the 1930s. Unfortunately, no record exists of the precise contents of the British Museum's gift; similarly, there is no record of the provenance of the other pieces in the collection. Their closest parallels, however, are from cemetery sites, such as Antinoë and Akhmîm itself.

It is well known that the dry, sterile conditions in the Egyptian deserts have preserved many thousands of anc. and Med textiles, which often emerge from the earth in excellent condition. The initial rediscovery of these textiles coincided with the growing interest in Egyptian archaeology by 19<sup>th</sup> Ct antiquities collectors and amateur archaeologists, many of whom travelled to Egypt for the opening up of newly rediscovered cemeteries there. Thus, for more than a century many thousands of LRom and Byz textiles have been preserved in museum collections throughout Europe and N America, as well as elsewhere, and have become the subject of a burgeoning scholarly literature. Unfortunately, the methods by which these textiles were excavated and recorded were often poor, even by the standards of the day, and fell far short of modern-day acceptable standards of archaeological excavation and recording.

**Dating methods.** On exceptional occasions it is possible to date such textiles with reference to stratified archaeological deposits, but far more often they are dated according to art historical and technical criteria, as well as by comparison with other media, such as wood carving or architecture. These methods have come under much scrutiny in recent decades and 'textile archaeologists' are now likely to exercise extreme caution when dating a textile that has no parallel from stratified archaeological layers.

The development of AMS radiocarbon dating, permitting the testing of very small samples of material, has proved extremely helpful in dating Egyptian textiles, although few textiles from museum collections have, as yet, been sampled.<sup>1</sup> AMS radiocarbon dating tends to be reserved for textiles extracted from the ground with mod. archaeological excavation methods, where they are potentially useful diagnostic tools for the dating of other materials. In most cases where radiocarbon



dates have been obtained they have rarely challenged conventional thinking on the broad date ranges of the textiles.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the increased use of AMS radiocarbon dating has facilitated the trend towards greater latitude in matters of dating, insofar as calibrated radiocarbon dates give a range of equally possible dates, rather than favouring one precise date over another.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, it was decided not to subject the textiles in this collection to AMS radiocarbon dating.

As the technical analysis of such textiles has come to the fore of the field, a vast array of new information on spinning and weaving methods has also become available. Egyptian textiles were usually woven either from linen or wool (or a combination of both) during the LRom and Byz periods. All manner of household cloths were woven, including curtains, pillowcases and other bedding. It is likely that most of the textiles in the Ure Museum comprise items of clothing. Wool was dyed a variety of colours, but linen was usually left unbleached and would have appeared an off-white colour, although most extant examples now appear as cream or beige.

**Textile art and L Antique costume.** The main burial rite during this period was inhumation and the body was usually dressed in everyday clothes, sometimes wrapped in a shroud. Emperor Theodosius I banned mummification of the dead at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ct and the archaeological record suggests that it became increasingly rare thereafter. Occasionally, bodies were wrapped in curtains or other items of household textile, presumably in the absence of a designated shroud. Complete garments – usually tunics – do survive, but the vast majority of LRom and Byz textiles from Egypt are in the form of fragments, usually comprising dress ornamentation of some kind. Garments were often highly decorated, with motifs and decorative bands and borders being incorporated into the cloth during the weaving process. Sometimes separately produced decorative bands were sewn onto a base fabric (e.g., 2005.7.4); sometimes bands were removed from one garment to decorate another.

Simple linen tunics with slits for neck openings appear to have been woven in one piece on the loom and then sewn together along the arms and length of the body. Decorative borders in tapestry weave were often produced around the ends of the sleeves and the neck opening, with bands of ornamentation running vertically down the length of the garment on either side of the chest, from the shoulder to either the waist or hem. These ornamental vertical bands are known as *clavi* and are almost always produced as tapestry (e.g., 2005.7.4, 10). They sometimes terminate in a leaf or an arrow motif and vary in thickness. Decorative roundels (*orbiculi*) or squares (e.g., 2005.7.1) were sometimes placed at the shoulders or at the base of the garment at the opening. These, as with most forms of dress ornamentation, were usually produced in a tapestry weave, woven in a combination of unbleached linen and coloured wool wefts on warps of unbleached linen.

**Art historical dating categories.** The range of colours and motifs used was extensive, although a repertoire can be discerned and monochrome designs were particularly popular between the L3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Cts AD. Several pieces in the Ure Museum collection comprise simple motifs such as wreaths and vine scrolls woven in brown-purple wool against a background of unbleached linen (e.g., 2005.7.1, 4). Other variants of purple are also represented, including 'optical purple', where red and blue yarns are plied together to produce the effect of purple (e.g., 2005.7.12). 'True' purple, that is, purple dye produced from the shells of murex whelks, has rarely been identified in Egyptian textiles.<sup>4</sup> The use of interlace was particularly popular (e.g., 2005.7.1).

From the 5<sup>th</sup> Ct onward, monochrome designs appear with more reference to figurative art, seemingly reflecting a stronger Gr-Rom influence, and include allegorical figures, huntsmen, riders and so on, as well as animals and birds. The use of polychrome figurative motifs was also popular in Egypt from an early date, although these are not represented in the Ure collection. From the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Cts, the rendering of figurative and zoomorphic motifs in textiles is generally argued to have become more and more stylized, possibly in response to contacts with Central Asia and the Far East. The contrast with the naturalistic figures of Gr-Rom art is now more pronounced and on textiles from this later period human figures are often depicted in frontal pose, with the head out of proportion to the body.

In general terms, these chronological divisions are still accepted by textile historians and archaeologists, although the overlap between the phases of transition is probably greater than much previous scholarly work has allowed, and there now is more readiness to acknowledge the co-existence of various styles of textile production and decoration. Where a linear and hierarchical relationship between 'folk' and 'official' textiles was once posited, this is now much more open to debate, if such categories can be used at all meaningfully.

**Are the textiles 'Coptic'?** There is still widespread usage of the term 'Coptic textiles' but, while not wholly inaccurate, this terminology has increasingly been challenged. In the main, this is because the term 'Coptic' refers to the linguistic and religious identity of the Christian population of Egypt, which flourishes down to the present day, rather than to a discrete chronological period. The official establishment of the 'Coptic' Church dates to 451, when it separated from the rest of the Orthodox Church following its refusal to accept the tenets of the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the use of the term 'Coptic' as a blanket term for post-Pharaonic Egyptian textiles has served to separate – in analytical terms – the textiles from the Rom, Byz and Islamic worlds of which their weavers and owners were an integral part. They are usually accepted as having a date range between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cts AD, and as such span the LRom, Byz and immediately post-Byz (E Islamic or Umayyad) periods. Moreover, although some textiles were clearly produced for an ecclesiastical 'market', most give no indication of the religious beliefs of their producers, sellers or consumers. For these reasons, therefore, the textiles published here are described as 'LRom and Byz' (and, where appropriate, 'Arabic'), rather than 'Coptic'. The term 'Coptic' may be appropriate as a descriptor for the religious identity expressed in the textile, especially where religious identities are explicit. Although not perfect, 'Arabic' is a less problematical term for describing post-conquest textiles than 'Islamic', which obfuscates political, religious and cultural identities.

**Weaving processes and the use of tapestry as a decorative technique.** Like many tapestry motifs and bands of this period now in museum collections, these fragments have been severed from the garments into which they were once incorporated. Nevertheless, it is still possible to ascertain the ground weave (or background textile) in most cases. This is usually a plain (or 'tabby') weave in unbleached linen, into which the tapestry design is incorporated. Tabby is the simplest of weaves, one in which the shuttle carrying the weft (the transverse threads) passes over and under alternating single warp strands (the longitudinal threads) on the loom whilst travelling in both the 'outward' and 'return' directions. On the 'return' passage of the shuttle it travels over and under the opposite warp threads to

those that it encountered on the 'outward' passage. Each completed 'outward' and 'return' journey is a 'pass', made up of 2 'picks' of weft.

After each pass, the wefts are beaten down or packed together before the shuttle is passed over and under the warp threads again. The pressure with which the wefts are packed together, along with the spacing of the warp threads, determines whether the cloth will be 'weft-faced' (with only the weft threads showing on the surface) or 'warp-faced' (where the weft threads are scarcely apparent and the warp threads dominate the surface of the cloth). The textiles published here have ground weaves where the proportion of warp threads to weft threads is approximately equal, and the resulting cloth is a plain tabby that is only slightly warp-faced or slightly weft-faced, if it is either. Identifying which are the weft threads and which are the warp threads is made straightforward if there is a selvage. However, since most of these fragments (with the exception of 2005.7.13) have no selvage, the warps and wefts have to be presumed.

The tapestry technique is a variation of plain weave, although the term is sometimes erroneously applied to all pictorial weaving. In this technique, discontinuous wefts are employed to build up a, sometimes extremely complex, design. In other words, the same weft thread does not necessarily travel from one selvage to the other. Instead, it may be passed backward and forward over a select number of warp threads, whilst wefts of different colours are passed backward and forward over other warp threads, as necessary for the design. The wefts are packed closely together so that the warp threads are not usually visible, and the result is a weft-faced textile with areas of design. In tapestry areas the wefts are usually woven on 2 or 3 warp threads.

A variety of techniques was employed to secure the discontinuous wefts and to permit the weaving of a durable piece of cloth. The textiles in this collection display several of these techniques, including single and multiple dovetailing, where adjoining wefts of different colours are alternately looped around the same warp thread (e.g., 2005.7.1, 4). This enables straight or almost straight vertical lines to be woven into the design without compromising the strength of the cloth. An alternative way of achieving this effect is to use 'slit tapestry', where discontinuous wefts are not looped around the same warp thread, but around adjacent warp threads instead (e.g., 2005.7.1, 4, 12). This technique can also be used to build up curves, by staggering the looping of the wefts around successive warp threads. 'Slit tapestry' was perhaps used principally because it permits the weaver to focus on building up the design in one area of the textile before moving onto another. By contrast, the dovetailing technique, which results in a stronger piece of cloth (that is, one without potentially large and weakening slits in it), requires the weaver to focus at all times on the overall design rather than one part of it. This is because if discontinuous wefts are alternately looped around the same warp the weaver has to work with all the relevant wefts simultaneously, rather than simply concentrating on the use of one single weft at a time.

The basic tapestry weave was often supplemented by other methods of ornamentation. Some of the textiles in this collection display 'inlaying', where additional weft threads, usually in a different colour, are laid at regular intervals between the wefts of the ground weave (e.g., 2005.7.11, 13). Whereas the ground weave wefts may pass over and under every alternate warp thread, the inlaid weft may pass over 4 warp threads, say, before passing under a single warp thread. A variation on this method has inlaid weft pass over and under the warp threads with less attention to regularity, e.g., passing over 5 threads, under one thread, over 3 threads, under 4 threads, over 2 threads, before finally passing under 5 threads.

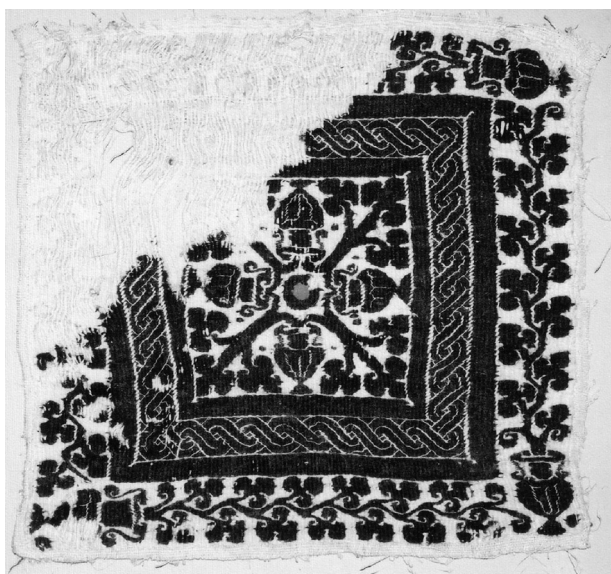
Some of the textiles have decorative features that resemble fine stitches of embroidery overlying the main tapestry woven design. These 'stitches' are usually produced in a single thread of undyed flax against a much darker background colour. They are not actually embroidered, but produced as an integral part of the weaving process by the introduction of a thin weft thread that 'floats' diagonally over the rest of the tapestry. The procedure is known as the 'flying shuttle' technique (also known as 'flying thread brocading' or 'weft brocading') and was used to add detail to designs and to highlight patterns and forms. Where the same technique is used to produce a thin vertical line over the tapestry areas it is known as 'vertical weft brocading'.

The direction in which yarn is spun has, in recent years, been the subject of much research, and it has been noted that textiles originating from the E Mediterranean are usually woven from wool or flax spun in the 'S-direction', as opposed to the 'Z-direction', which is more commonly associated with the W in this period. The 'S' and 'Z' designations refer to the letter of the alphabet formed by the twist in the yarn. 'S-direction' spun yarns were spun to the left (anti-clockwise), with the whorl mounted on the top of the spindle. The strongest yarns are those spun in one direction and then plied in the other, the most common in the E Mediterranean world being 'S-direction' spun yarns being plied in the 'Z-direction'. Most examples of yarns spun with this technique date from the 6<sup>th</sup> Ct onward. The yarns published here are spun in the 'S-direction', as might be expected.

**2005.7.1 (Fig. 13).** Tapestry square (tabula) with *canthares* and foliate design, made of unbleached linen and dyed wool. 220mm x 220mm. From Akhmîm, Egypt, 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> Ct AD.

This is a tapestry square cut-out with a design principally executed in russet-coloured wool on an unbleached linen background. The only deviation from this is a small central circle in yellow wool, probably intended to represent gold. The design comprises a central square (84mm x 84mm) with 4 decorative borders.

The central yellow circle (*di*. 7mm) is framed by an octagon or star formed by the roots of 4 stylized trees. Each tree trunk runs at 45 degrees to the corners of the square and each tree has



13. Tapestry square with *canthares* and foliate design (2005.7.1)



3 trefoils (representing leaves), extending to the limits of the square. The roots of the trees emerge from 4 ornamental vases (*canthares*), one of which is located centrally along each side of the square.

The square itself is bordered by a solid russet-coloured line. This, in turn, is bordered by a 4-strand interlace or cable border in the flying shuttle technique. Another solid russet-coloured line frames this interlace border. Finally, the whole design is bordered by 4 vine scrolls with alternating trefoils and tendrils, one on each side of the square. Each vine scroll protrudes from a *canthare* similar to those found within the square itself.

The textile is produced in finely spun linen and wool and does not appear to be shrunken, although the weave is slightly distorted in places. The square is intact, although approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the wool wefts are worn completely away, leaving a triangular area comprised only of unbleached linen warps and wefts.

The *canthare* with vine tendrils emerging from its neck is a very common motif in textiles from Egypt. Analogous tapestry squares, also from Akhmîm, are found in several museums, with a close comparison at the Textile Museum in Washington DC (71.119): J. Trilling, *Roman Heritage: Textiles from Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean, 300 to 600 AD* (Washington DC, The Textile Museum, 1982). The same overall design can also be found superimposed on another square, so as to form an 8-pointed star, as, for example, at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (1888.744) and the Cluny Museum, Paris (13162): A. Lorquin, *Les Tissus coptes au Musée national du Moyen Age, Thermes de Cluny: catalogue des étoffes égyptiennes de lin et de laine de l'Antiquité tardive aux premiers siècles de l'Islam* (Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux, 1992), 76, no. 11. In the latter example the *canthare* motif is almost identical in form and size to those forming the central part of this fragment. In other cases, a much more simplified version appears, as in an example in the Victoria and Albert Museum (203-1891): A.F. Kendrick, *Catalogue of Textiles from Burying-Grounds in Egypt I* (London, HMSO, 1922), 120, no. 281. The *canthare* also appears as a motif in its own right, as, for example, in the Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna (T. 661-1883): P. Noever and A. Völker, *Fragile Remnants: Egyptian Textiles of Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Vienna, Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, 1994), 140, fig. 80.

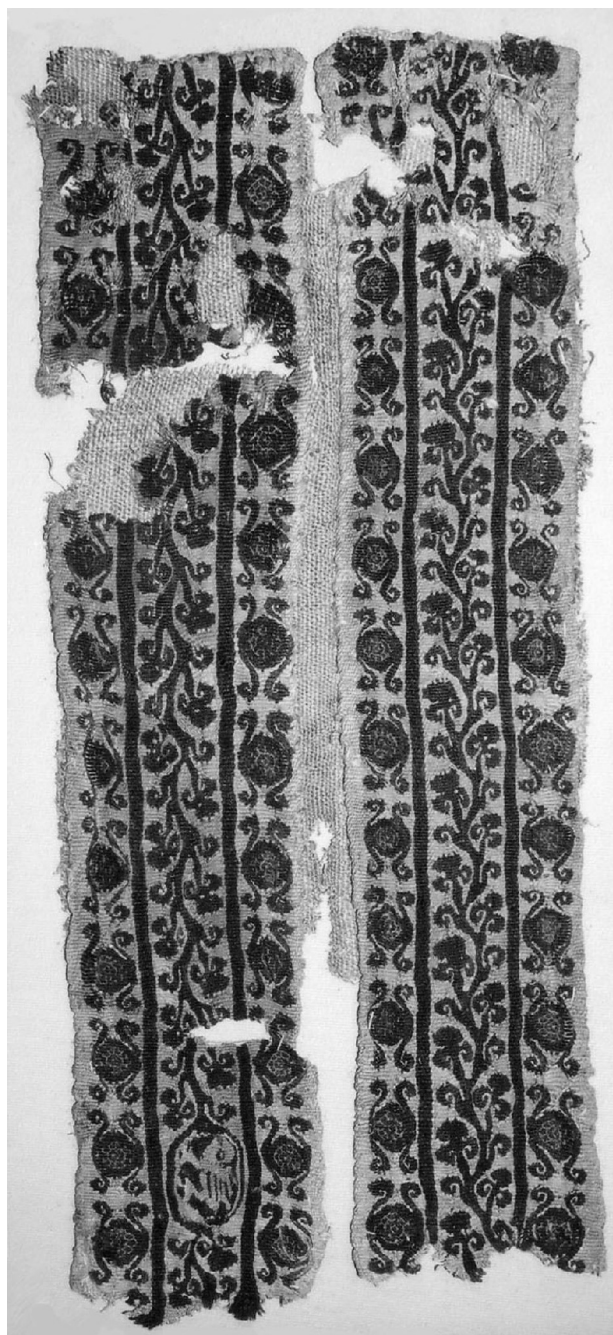
*Technical details.* Base fabric. None.

A. Ground weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 14 threads per cm. Weft: unbleached linen, S-direction spun, approximately 15 threads per cm. Weave: simple tabby (1/1).

B. Tapestry areas. Tapestry weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 20 threads per cm. Weft: unbleached linen, S-direction spin. Russet-coloured and yellow wool, S-direction spin. Ribs per cm: 7. Weave: weft-faced tabby; tapestry woven on 3 warp threads. Special techniques: interlace design and finer details of the *canthares* produced by the 'flying shuttle' technique in one single thread of unbleached flax; 'split tapestry'; dovetailing; wrapping around one warp thread and vertical weft brocading

**2005.7.4 (Fig. 14).** Fragment of linen with 2 tapestry bands (*clavi*) of foliate and zoomorphic design, made of unbleached linen and dyed wool. 117mm x 290mm. From Akhmîm, Egypt; probably 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Ct AD.

The textile fragment consists of 2 matching tapestry bands (*clavi*) stitched parallel to each other on a base fabric of plain tabby weave in unbleached linen. Each band incorporates a central row of repeating vine scroll with alternating trefoils and



14. Fragment of linen with 2 tapestry bands of foliate and zoomorphic design (2005.7.4)

tendrils in brown-purple and brown-black wool. These are flanked on each side by a solid line, one of brown-purple wool and the other of brown-black wool. The solid lines are, in turn, flanked by a row of repeating small brown-purple circles, each enveloped by 2 brown-black scrolls and each filled with a small brown-black dot.

The patterns of the 2 bands are almost identical to each other, suggesting that they were woven as one piece. A stylized zoomorphic motif (possibly a bird) enclosed in an oval appears on one of the bands. The oval merges at each end into the main vine scroll. This band also has 2 possible slits (up to 20mm l.)

spaced 150mm apart and placed perpendicular to the long side of the band. These are 67mm and 217mm respectively from the hemmed edge. In other respects the 2 bands are identical.

The main design is produced in 2 shades of wool, now appearing brown-purple and brown-black, on a background of unbleached linen. In addition, the lips of the stylized zoomorphic motif are comprised of some 3 or 4 stitches in fine red wool.

The tapestry bands are stitched to the backing in such a way that the horizontal vine scroll pattern runs in opposite directions. The longest sides of each band have been turned under at their edges and tacked to the base fabric with a loose running stitch, before being secured with a simple left-slanting overstitch. On one short side of the fragment the ends of each band are turned under and fastened to the backcloth with overstitch, forming a simple hem. There is no indication of similar hemming on the base fabric itself.

The fragment is produced in extremely fine wool and linen threads. It is in good condition, although some fibres are heavily stained, possibly with body fluids. The weave is distorted.

A vine scroll design analogous to that on the Ure piece, albeit without accompanying zoomorphic motif, is found on a fragment of band, dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> Ct, which is now at Bologna (487): F. Ghigginì, *Tessuti Copti: La Collezione del Museo Storico Didattico della Tappezeria* (Bologna, CLUEB, 2000), 64–65, no. 30. Yet more examples, this time with zoomorphic motifs, can be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum (T41-1936) and the Brooklyn Museum (08.480.52): D. Thompson, *Coptic Textiles in the Brooklyn Museum* (New York, The Brooklyn Museum, 1971), 34, no. 12. A crudely-executed design of a vine scroll incorporating a zoomorphic motif inside an oval can be found at Bargello (596D/F): P. Peri (ed.), *Tessuti copti nelle collezioni del Museo del Bargello* (Florence, Associazione amici del Bargello, 1996).

It is possible that the tapestry band is older than the base fabric on which it is stitched and that the fragment is an example of the reuse of textiles in dress ornamentation. Such practices are known from Byz Egypt, although it is unlikely that the tapestry bands would be more than a few decades older than the base fabric to which they were stitched.

**Technical details.** Base fabric. Dimensions: approximately 117mm x 290mm. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 13 threads per cm. Weft: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 17 threads per cm. Weave: simple tabby (1/1).

A. Ground weave. None.

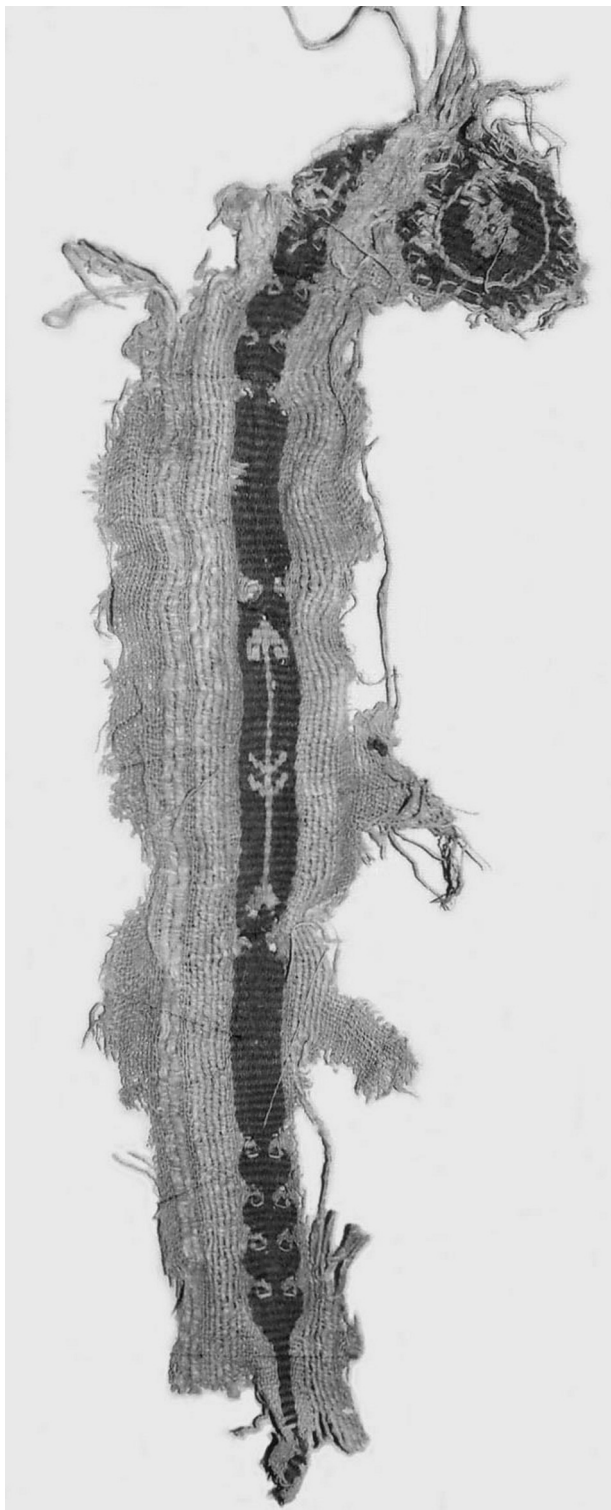
B. Tapestry areas. Tapestry weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 16 threads per cm. Weft: unbleached linen, S-direction spin. Purple and 'brown-black' wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Weave: weft-faced tabby; tapestry woven on one or 2 warp threads. Ribs per cm: 14. Special techniques: flying shuttle technique; dovetailing.

**2005.7.10 (Fig. 15).** Fragment of linen textile incorporating a small medallion motif and band, made of unbleached linen and dyed wool. Approximately 170mm x 35mm. Provenance unknown; probably 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> Ct AD.

A fragment (probably from an unbleached linen tunic) comprising a narrow band (*clavus*) and a medallion (possibly part of another *clavus*) on a ground weave of plain tabby executed in finely spun unbleached linen thread.

The band comprises a series of 3 elongated lozenges joined by narrow necks. These are worked in red wool against a plain unbleached linen background. At each end of the fragment the band takes the form of 4 red trefoil motifs, each joined to the

other. The central lozenge is decorated with 2 small white motifs: a heart and a trefoil. They are joined by a thin white (unbleached linen) line with 2 arrows at its centre. The small red medallion has a wave crest border, also in red wool, and a leaf motif in unbleached linen in its centre.



15. Fragment of linen textile incorporating a small medallion and band (2005.7.10)

The ground weave has areas of 'self-banding' (also in unbleached linen threads) on either side of the red wool band. This technique was often used in LRom and Byz weaving to draw attention to adjacent areas of decoration or to the edge of a garment without the introduction of colour. It involves multiple picks of weft being inserted without changing the position of the heddle. Ordinarily, in plain tabby weave the position of the heddle would be changed after every passage of the shuttle. In this example thicker weft threads have also been inserted to produce more variety and texture in the design.

The piece is in fair condition; the medallion is attached to the rest of the fragment by only a few threads.

Analogous textiles are held by the Musée de Mariemont (DM96) and the Textile Museum, Washington DC (72.165). See A. Azzam and M.-C. Bruwier, *Égyptiennes Étoffes coptes du Nil* (Mariemont, Musée de Mariemont, 1997), 176, pl. 58; J. Trilling, *Roman Heritage: Textiles from Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean, 300 to 600 AD* (Washington DC, The Textile Museum, 1982), 34, pl. 5. See also A. de Moor (ed.), *Coptic Textiles from Private Flemish Collections* (Zottegem, Provinciaal Archeologisch Museum van Zuid-Oost-Vlaanderen, 1993), 198. Another comparative piece was excavated from grave 433 at Antinoë in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Ct and is now in Haute-Alsace (965.157.1-8): M. Rassart-Debergh, *Textiles d'Antioë (Égypte) en Haute-Alsace* (Colmar, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Colmar, 1997), 95, 141, fig. 120.

*Technical details.* Base fabric. None.

A. Ground weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 21 threads per cm. Weft: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 22 threads per cm. Weave: simple tabby weave (1/1). Other features: the *clavus* is flanked on one side by a narrow (3mm) area of 5–6 self-bands in unbleached linen.

B. Tapestry areas. Tapestry weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 18 threads per cm. Weft: unbleached linen, S-direction spin. Red wool, S-direction spin. Weave: tapestry weave; tapestry woven over 2 warp threads. Ribs per cm: 9. Special techniques: dovetailing; self-banding; wrapping around one warp thread.

**2005.7.11 (Fig. 16).** Fragment of textile with darned areas, made of dyed wool and unbleached linen. Approximately 150mm x 110mm. Provenance unknown; probably 8<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Ct AD.

This is a fragment of weft-faced tabby comprising brown-yellow wool and blue-red wool wefts woven over unbleached linen warp threads. It is possible that the blue-red wool is a form of 'optical purple'.

The piece incorporates areas which appear to have been strengthened or repaired by darning, achieved with inlaid threads. These are thicker weft threads laid over the top of pre-existing weft threads, so that they are visible only on the front of the textile and do not appear on the reverse side except where there is a change in their direction. The inlaid threads are comprised of 2-ply yellow-brown wool, spun in the S-direction and plied in the Z-direction, so as to produce an optimally stable and durable thread.

The extant fragment appears to have been part of a much larger textile and it is not possible to reconstruct the pattern, although it appears to have been comprised of a series of rectangles or squares. It is in good condition.

Published comparisons are rare, but this may represent the tendency of museums to accept and to publish those pieces with higher art historical than archaeological value. The appearance of fragments analogous to this may have caused them to be

selected against and thus to appear missing from the published record. An exception is the child's tunic in the Whitworth Art Gallery, which has darning in at least 10 different colour threads (T.8505): F. Pritchard, *Clothing Culture: Dress in Egypt in the First Millennium AD* (Manchester, Whitworth Art Gallery, 2006), 40, fig. 3.14.

*Technical details.* Base fabric. None.

A. Ground weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 9 threads per cm. Weft: blue-red wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Brown-yellow wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Weave: weft-faced tabby; tapestry woven over one warp thread. Ribs per cm: 9.

B. Darned areas. Warp: yellow-brown wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Weft: yellow-brown wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Special techniques: inlaid threads or darning.

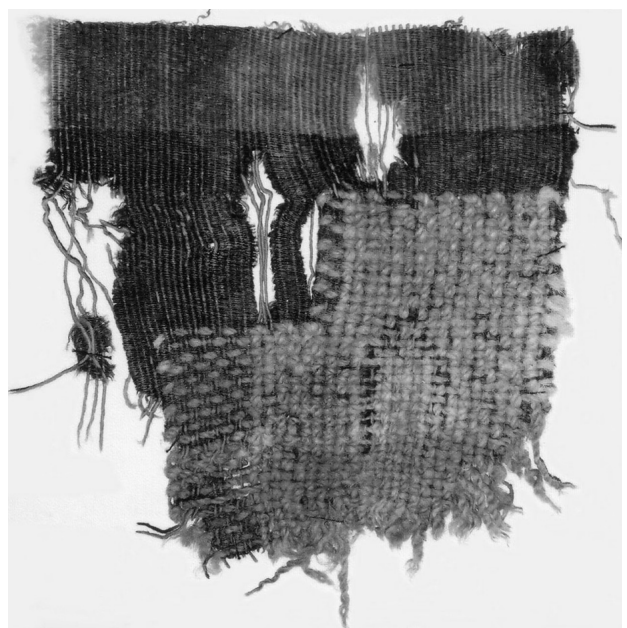
**2005.7.12 (Fig. 17).** Fragment of purple tapestry with geometric design, made of unbleached linen and 'blue-purple' wool. Approximately 120mm x 125mm. Provenance unknown; probably 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Ct AD.

Fragment of a probable band (*clavus*). The ground weave is worked in a blend of blue and red wool, plied together to produce the effect of purple. This is a well-known technique, with a resultant effect often described as 'optical purple'. Different coloured yarns were regularly combined to produce a greater variety of shades. The use of blue dyed wool in background weaves has also been associated with Persian or Persian-influenced textiles.

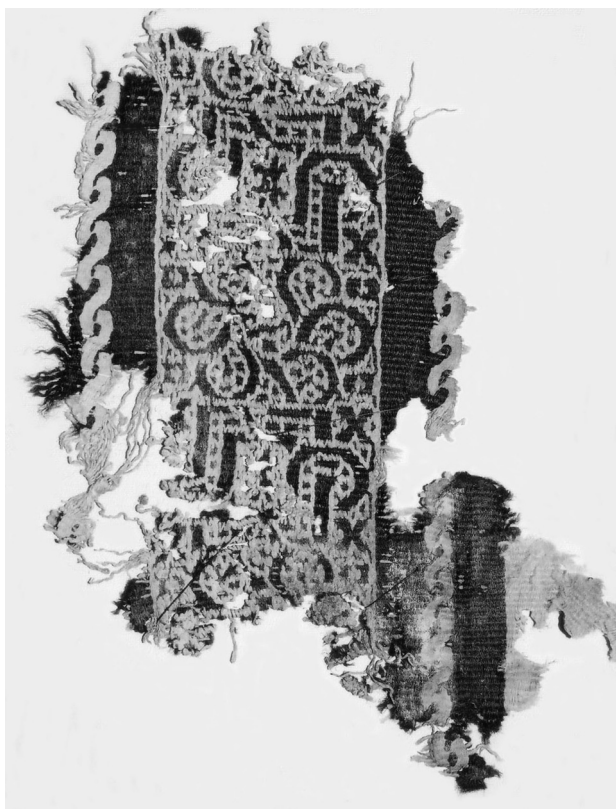
The central design on this fragment comprises a series of interconnecting circles and scrolls, sometimes linked by vertical lines executed in vertical weft brocading. A running wave crest motif in unbleached linen thread borders one length of the band.

There is an analogous textile fragment in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (1956.702), also worked in a blend of blue and red wool that combines to produce the effect of purple. This fragment, too, is without provenance.

*Technical details.* Base fabric. None.



16. Fragment of textile with darned areas (2005.7.11)



17. Fragment of purple tapestry with geometric design (2005.7.12)

A. Ground weave. Warp: blue-red wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply, approximately 10 threads per cm. Weft: blue-red wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply, approximately 18 threads per cm. Weave: weft-faced tabby. Other features: none.

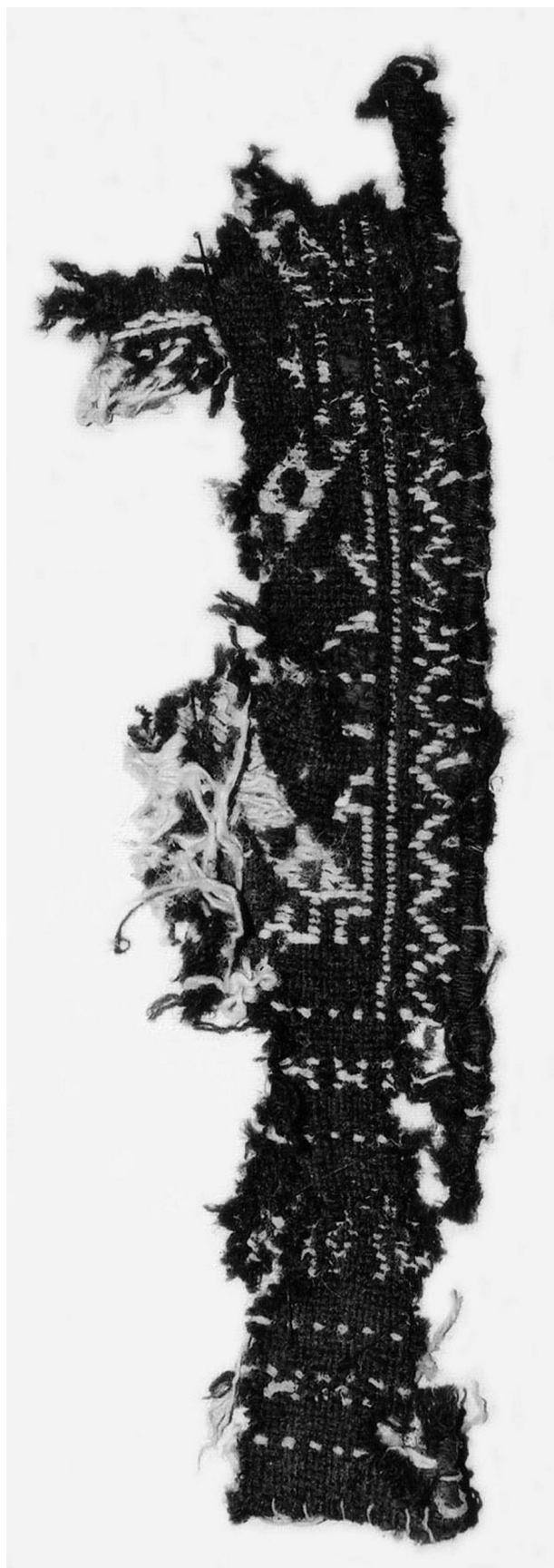
B. Tapestry areas. Tapestry weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin, approximately 8 threads per cm. Weft: unbleached linen, S-direction spin. Blue-red wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Weave: weft-faced tabby; tapestry woven over one warp. Ribs per cm: 8. Special techniques: wrapping around one warp thread.

**2005.7.13 (Fig. 18).** Fragment of tapestry with geometric design, probably from a band (*clavus*) or square, in brown-purple wool and unbleached linen. Approximately 35mm x 156mm. Provenance unknown; probably 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Ct AD.

A solid line in unbleached linen appears on 3 sides of the fragment. On one side of the line there is a zigzag motif, while on the other there is a geometric design consisting of diagonal lines and small flowers or petals of red wool. The design is executed in unbleached linen threads on a brown-purple background.

There is one selvedge edge, indicating that this is the transverse edge of the textile as woven on the loom. A zigzag motif runs alongside the selvedge, bordered by the solid line in unbleached linen.

The side of the fragment running perpendicular to the selvedge has been turned under and hemmed with whiplash or overstitch. A single stitch in pink-red wool is appended to this edge, suggesting that the fragment was, at some stage, sewn to a pink-red textile of unknown form and size.



18. Fragment of tapestry with geometric design (2005.7.13)

Comparisons include a fragment of tapestry in the Victoria and Albert Museum (481-1889) and another in Liverpool Museum (56.20.799): A.F. Kendrick, *Catalogue of Textiles from Burying-Grounds in Egypt I* (London, HMSO, 1922), 85, no. 85; M. Seagroatt, *Coptic Weaves: Notes on the Collection of Coptic Textiles in the Merseyside County Museums* (Liverpool, Merseyside County Museum, 1965), 37, pl. 18; M. Seagroatt, 'The Coptic textile collection' *Liverpool Bulletin* 10 (1961-1962). Both of these were excavated in the Fayum area, although an origin in Syria or Anatolia has been suggested for the Victoria and Albert Museum textile. The Louvre has more comparative pieces. See P. du Bourguet, *Catalogues des étoffes coptes du musée du Louvre* (Paris, Éditions des musées nationaux, 1964), 337 (F239). A fragment of tunic from Antinoë in the Museo Nazionale di Ravenna has a cuff bordered in an analogous tapestry weave, albeit with a slightly different decorative pattern (2465): C. Rizzardi, *I Tessuti Copti del Museo Nazionale di Ravenna* (Ravenna, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1993), 108-09, pl. 44. This might suggest a similar purpose for the Ure fragment. Another comparative fragment from Antinoë is now in Haute-Alsace (Eg. Cpt.176): M. Rassart-Debergh, *Textiles d'Antioé (Égypte) en Haute-Alsace* (Colmar, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle de Colmar, 1997), 160, fig. 253.

Technical details. Base fabric. None.

A. Ground weave. None.

B. Tapestry areas. Tapestry weave. Warp: unbleached linen, S-direction spin. Brown-purple wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Approximately 16 threads per cm. Weft: brown-purple wool, S-direction spin, Z-direction ply. Weave: plain tabby; tapestry woven over 2 warp threads. Ribs per cm: N/A. Special techniques: 'inlaid' or 'floating' wefts.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions include textiles from private collections in Belgium and the Whitworth Art Gallery at the University of Manchester: M. van Strydonck, K. van der Borg and A. de Jong, 'The dating of Coptic textiles by radiocarbon analysis' in A. de Moor (ed.), *Coptic Textiles from Private Flemish Collections* (Zottegem, Provinciaal Archeologisch Museum van Zuid-Oost-Vlaanderen, 1993), 65-71; F. Pritchard, *Clothing Culture: Dress in Egypt in the First Millennium AD* (Manchester, Whitworth Art Gallery, 2006), 13-25.

<sup>2</sup> A. Paetz gen. Schieck, *Die Koptischen Textilien: Gewebe und Gewänder des ersten Jahrtausends aus Ägypten* (Cologne, Kolumba, 2005), 10.

<sup>3</sup> M. van Strydonck, K. van der Borg and A. de Jong, 'The dating of Coptic textiles by radiocarbon analysis' in A. de Moor (ed.), *Coptic Textiles from Private Flemish Collections* (Zottegem, Provinciaal Archeologisch Museum van Zuid-Oost-Vlaanderen, 1993), 65-71.

<sup>4</sup> J. Wouters, 'Dye analysis of Coptic textiles' in A. de Moor (ed.), *Coptic Textiles from Private Flemish Collections* (Zottegem, Provinciaal Archeologisch Museum van Zuid-Oost-Vlaanderen, 1993), 53-65.

<sup>5</sup> O.F.A. Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity* (Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 1999), 9.

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